



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Coast Guard Eases Restrictions for Barge Traffic on Upper Mississippi River

ST. LOUIS – The U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP) St. Louis, issued a safety advisory Wednesday afternoon easing restrictions for barge traffic on the Upper Mississippi River. In coordination with the COTP Paducah, Ky., the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the River Industry Action Committee (RIAC), the COTP St. Louis issued an advisory that allows previously loaded barges drawing nine feet, six inches or less to move on the river between mile markers 0.0 to 185.0. The advisory further allows empty barges to be loaded to a maximum draft of nine feet and allows single skin tank barges drafting up to nine feet to proceed through the advisory area that runs from Cairo, Ill. to St. Louis. Previous safety advisories limited barge drafts to eight feet, six inches, and prohibited the movement of single skin tank barges drafting more than eight feet, six inches and any barges drafting more than nine feet.

Wednesday's advisory continues to urge mariners to make fleeting arrangements prior to entering the port of St. Louis and the advisory continues to limit the size of tows operating on the river. Northbound tows are limited to not more than 24 barges, with no more than 15 loaded barges within the tow. Southbound tows are limited to not more than 20 barges.

Improved river conditions allowed for the change in the safety advisory. The river stage for the Upper Mississippi River, as read on the St. Louis gauge, was -3.0 feet Wednesday evening. The National Weather Service forecasts a slight drop in river stages over the next few days.

The St. Louis COTP also established a safety zone between mile markers 70 and 72 near Grand Tower, Ill., due to salvage operations in the area. A barge that ran aground there in January sank but could not be salvaged until now due to low water and ice conditions. The safety zone prohibits any vessel traffic from entering the zone during daylight hours. The safety zone will remain in effect until salvage operations are completed.

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